

LESSON PLAN

Capitals, Oceans, and Border States

Level: Literacy, Low Beginning

Suggested Length: 2 or 3 class periods, depending on class time and level

Civics Test Questions

- #44—What is the capital of your state?
- #89—What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?
- #90—What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?
- #92—Name one state that borders Canada.
- #93—Name one state that borders Mexico.
- #94—What is the capital of the United States?

Reading Test Vocabulary

- capital, country, state, states
- America, United States, U.S.
- What
- is, name
- of, on, the
- one, north, south

Writing Test Vocabulary

- capital, state, states
- Alaska, California, Canada, Mexico, New York, United States, Washington, Washington, D.C.
- is
- in, of, on, the
- one, north, south

Objectives:

- Students will write general questions and answers about capitals (native country, U.S., home state).
- Students will locate and label Washington, D.C., on map.
- Students will locate and label home state and state capital on map.
- Students will locate and label Pacific and Atlantic Oceans on map.
- Students will identify Canada, Mexico, and U.S. border states on map.
- Students will use directional vocabulary (North, South, East, West).

Materials:

- Directional compass drawn on board (unlabeled)
- 2 large wall maps: one world map and one U.S. political map with state names and state capitals
- 4 handouts: **Capital, States #1, States #2, Map of U.S.**
- Activities and Games – Capitals, Oceans, and Border States (Instructions for Teachers)**
- Optional handout (for more practice or follow-up lesson): **Categories—Capitals, Oceans, and Border States**
- 5 optional handouts (Literacy Level Writing Practice): **Map Directions, North, South, East, West**



Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

This geography lesson plan covers three concepts in two parts: Part One—**Capitals** (state and national) and Part Two—**Oceans & Border States**, along with additional optional activities. Note that, throughout the lesson, you will teach and reinforce directional vocabulary (north, south, east and west). In planning, consider whether you wish to cover this material in two or three class sessions. Part One focuses on capitals by first having students identify their native country and its capital on a world map and then identifying their state and the U.S. capital. Part Two covers oceans and border states, but you should not announce this to the class. This is because Part Two is a discovery exercise in which the students draw conclusions, or “discover” something, about the information provided. Here, they discover and identify

the states that border Mexico and Canada, both Civics test items. In handouts **States #1** and **States #2**, students start by writing the state names in alphabetical order. This step allows students to focus on and become familiar with these specific state names. From there, they label states on the map and answer items in order to discover the border state names. Students also identify the west and east coasts of the U.S. and label the ocean names on the map. Refer to **Activities and Games (Instructions for Teachers)** for easy, student-centered strategies to practice and reinforce the lesson content. The handouts **Map Directions, North, South, East, and West** for Literacy Level Writing Practice help beginners practice spelling and handwriting while using content words from the lesson.

Introduction: Display the world and U.S. maps on the board. Tell the class that they will study maps in this lesson. Draw a compass on the board and ask students to name the 4 directional vocabulary words (**NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST**) as you label them on the board. Compare the U.S. map to the compass, and ask **What’s**

north of the U.S.? What’s south of the U.S.?, What’s east of the U.S.?, What’s west of the U.S.? Pointing to the coasts, ask **What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?** and **What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?** Point out that these items about the oceans are on the Civics test.

Warm-up: Tell the class that you will talk about capitals first. Ask a more advanced student to come to the board and ask **Where are you from?** Student finds and points to his/her native country on the world map. Ask **What’s the capital of (the student’s country)?** Student answers, locates, and points it out. Repeat this process with 2-3 more students, and have them each come up and show the native country and identify its capital. Then have the student at the board choose and call on the next person to come up until everyone has had a turn at the board and a turn asking and answering these questions. This

turn-taking can be modified or be skipped if the majority of your students are from the same country. (Note: keep in mind that students unfamiliar with maps may have difficulty locating their home country so let classmates assist, if needed.) Ask the whole class **What’s the capital of the United States?** Have a volunteer locate and point out Washington, D.C. on the U.S. map. Ask students **How do you spell Washington, D.C.?** while you write it on the board for them to copy. Point out that **What is the capital of the United States?** is on the Civics Test.

Guided Practice: Distribute the handout **Capital** for students to complete (copy work and questions/answers). Give students time to work on this handout, allowing them to help each other as necessary. On the map at the top, students fill in blanks with Washington, DC, ocean names, and United States of America. At the bottom of the handout, students locate and label their home state and label Washington, D.C. Ask the class **What state do we live in?** (Answers may vary if your program serves students from nearby states). Ask the class to find their state on the handout and spell the state name out loud. Write the state

name(s) on the board for students to copy. Ask **What’s the capital of (your state)?** Write the state capital name on the board. Have students put a star and label their state capital. Point out that **What is the capital of your state?** is on the Civics Test. Ask **What states are next to our state?** Then re-phrase it and ask **What states border our state?** Have students label the neighboring states. (This is not required for the test but it helps students orient their location on a map while introducing the concept of “border.”) Circulate and check papers.

Practice: Distribute handouts **States #1** and **U.S. Map**. Tell the class that you want to talk about the United States. Refer to the **States #1**, and model the four state names for students to practice. Tell them to write the names in alphabetical, or “A-B-C”, order. (If needed, quickly review alphabetizing by using a few student names as examples.) Have students work individually on **States #1**, putting state names in alphabetical order and referring to **U.S. Map** and the wall maps. For literacy level students, go over handout **States #1** with the class as a whole, following these steps:

- 1) Put state names in alphabetical order. [**Answers: Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas**]
- 2) Write the four state names on handout **U.S. map**. Students can refer to U.S. wall map if needed.
- 3) Read and answer items about states. [**Answers: 1) New Mexico, 2) California or Nevada, 3) Texas or Oklahoma, 4) Mexico, 5) Answers vary.**]

Evaluation: As the students locate the 4 states on the U.S. Map handout and finish the items on **States #1**, they should see that these are all states bordering on Mexico. Ask the class **What does border mean?** Review answers from **States #1**. Model and practice the pronunciation of the state names. To check comprehension, say **Name**

one state that borders Mexico, then say **Name another one....** Point out that **Name one state that borders Mexico** is on the Civics Test. For more practice, ask students to name the counties or towns that “border” your city, or to name the countries that border their native country.

Follow-up/Extension: If ready, students can begin **States #2** during this class period. If not, use **States #2** for homework or follow-up lesson. Alphabetizing the words on **States #2** is challenging since some words begin with the same letter. Review **States #2** as a class, repeating steps in **Practice** and **Evaluation** outlined above, this time focusing on states that border Canada. [**Answers for alphabetical order: Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington.** **Answers for the items at the bottom: 1) Minnesota,**

2) Idaho, 3) Ohio or West Virginia, 4) Vermont, 5) Canada, 6) Answers vary.] Point out that **Name one state that borders Canada** is on the Civics Test. Call on individuals to **Name one state that borders Mexico/ Canada**, so they become familiar with this type of test item. Also review **What is the capital of the U.S. / (your state)?** Have students practice the 6 test items in pairs, role-playing as teacher/student or immigration officer/applicant. Refer to **Activities and Games (Instructions for Teachers)** and handout **Categories** for more ideas to use in follow-up lessons.

Additional Writing Practice for Literacy/Low Beginning Students: Handouts **Map Directions, North, South, East** and **West** are included for optional copy work in class or for homework. Students can practice writing

words from the Reading and Writing Vocabulary lists or from the Civics test. Test items related to the vocabulary are included in each writing practice handout.

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES (INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS)

Capitals, Oceans, and Border States

Activity 1: Alphabet Line-Up and U.S. Map Work (whole class)

Preparation: 1) Make a set of vocabulary words cards (total 24) on a pad of sticky notes—cut notes in half. Write 1 word per sticky note: **Atlantic, Pacific, Canada, Mexico, United States, Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, Washington, D.C., and your state capital.** 2) Place a large U.S. map on the wall.

Instructions: Distribute 1 sticky note to each student. (It's okay if you have words/notes left over.) Tell the students to get up and form a line in correct alphabetical order according to the word they are holding. With a class of more than 24, extra students can play “teacher” to direct the others and check the line-up. Let the students sort out this line-up process by themselves—it may take time, but they will get it, use English, and have fun doing it. When the line-up is ready, start with A and ask each student in turn to read their word aloud, going down the line. (With any leftover words, you can ask the students where these words fit into the line, and you can hand those notes to students in that part of the line.) Ask each student to read their word, and then go up to the U.S.

map and stick their word in the proper location on the map. When done, all 24 sticky notes should be on the map, “illustrating” the vocabulary and tying it to the map. Review by asking the class the exact Civics test items and allow individual students to call out their answers from the words they held.

Variation on this activity: Call on a more advanced student in the line-up and ask that student to read their word aloud. Then ask the class **What Civics test question is this?** For example, the student reads his word **New Mexico**. You ask the class **What Civics test question is this?** The student answers **Name one state that borders Mexico**, or some reasonable version of the test item. Ask the class **Who else has an answer for Name one state that borders Mexico?** The 2 students holding **California** and **Texas** answer, for example. (Important reminder: for the purposes of this activity, students *do not* need to say the test items perfectly and will *not* need to produce the items during their naturalization interview. However, applicants must comprehend and answer the Immigration Officer's questions. This activity serves as a way to help students practice test items and make connections between the items and possible answers.)

Activity 2: Category Game (small groups, pairs, or individuals)

Preparation: Depending on the size of your class, make 5 - 6 sets of the sticky notes with the vocabulary as described above. Prepare 1 file folder for each set of words: 1) Open the folder flat; 2) Divide (or draw) 5

category boxes on the inside; 3) Label each category at the top with: **Oceans, Capitals, Country, Border States with Mexico, Border States with Canada.** (It's a good idea to “test” the folder categories yourself before class, by sticking the notes into the correct boxes.)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Border States with Mexico</i>	<i>Border States with Canada</i>
<i>Oceans</i>		
<i>Capitals</i>		

Instructions: Hand each small group of students a file folder containing 1 set of 24 sticky notes randomly stuck inside. Tell students to open the folder and, together, read the 5 categories aloud, checking for comprehension. Tell the students to review the words and “stick” each one in the right box. Circulate and check their work. To go over as a group, ask students the full test item from the Civics test, such as **What is the capital of the United States?** or **Name one state that borders Canada.**



Activities and Games (continued)

The Great Thing about Using Sticky Notes: Sticky Notes work particularly well with kinesthetic learners since students can manipulate the notes and not worry about handwriting or spelling. Beginners enjoy this visual, non-threatening activity, but it also works for more advanced students. Folders with categories (in boxes or columns) and vocabulary words on prepared notes can be adapted for history topics. For example, to review (or introduce) “Colonial Period and Independence,” make folders with categories like **REASONS COLONISTS CAME**

TO AMERICA, WHY COLONISTS FOUGHT BRITISH, ORIGINAL 13 STATES, WRITERS OF FEDERALIST PAPERS with notes showing all optional answers suggested in the Civics Test preparation information. This strategy can be adapted for ESL lessons too. For instance, create folders with categories labeled /t/, /d/, /-id/, and have students look at regular past tense verbs on sticky notes and decide which “-ed” pronunciation pattern the verbs represent.